CEDAR CITY DISTRICT
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COVER SHEET

EA#UT-049-98-006

Date: May 4, 1998

Preparing Office: Escalante Resource Area
P.O. Box 225
Escalante, Utah 84726

Project Title: Noxious Weed Control

Project Type: Vegetation Manipulation

Initiated by: BLM

Location: Escalante Resource Area

I. Introduction

The proposed action is needed to control noxious weeds on public lands as directed by the Utah BLM State Director. Noxious weeds are increasing in the resource area and threaten the health of native and desirable plant species.

Conformance with applicable land use plans

This proposal conforms with the Cedar/Beaver/Garfield/ Antimony Resource Management Plan, the Paria Management Framework Plan (MFP) The Escalante Management Framework Plan (MFP).

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations or Other Plans

The proposed action is subject to the Interim Management Guidance for Management of the Grand Staircase - Escalante National Monument. The guidance states that noxious weed control should continue.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is tiered to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States, of May, 1991, which addresses the control of noxious weeds on public lands, and to the Utah Record of decision (ROD) dated July, 1991. This proposal is consistent with the purpose and need set forth in the FEIS and ROD.

II. Description of the proposed action: The proposed action is to control noxious weeds on lands in Garfield and Kane counties that are managed by the Bureau of Land Management. All species of noxious weeds will be treated as locations are identified and budget constraints allow. These species include, but are not limited to, White top (Cardaria spp.) and Knapweed (Centaurea spp.)

All methods of treatment (manual, mechanical, biological, prescribed burning and chemical) have been approved for use on BLM lands by the Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States (USDI, 1991)

All noxious weeds would be treated by the most practical means as determined by the Area Manager. Potential impacts to Threatened & Endangered Species would be reviewed on an annual basis prior to treatment of any area. In areas where threatened or endangered species are found, only those methods of treatment known to have no impact on the T&E species would be allowed.

As new areas of noxious weeds are identified, they would be reviewed by the Resource Area staff to avoid or mitigate resource conflicts.

No Action Alternative

The no action alternative would be to not control the noxious weeds on public lands.

III. Environmental Impacts:

The following critical elements have been reviewed for the proposed action and the no action alternative.

CRITICAL ELEMENT	AFFECTED	CRITICAL ELEMENT	AFFECTED
Air Quality	No	Native American Trust Rights	No
ACECs	No	T & E Species	No
Cultural Resources	No	Solid and Hazardous Waste	No
Environmental Justice	No	Water Quality	No
Prime and Unique Farmlands	No	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	No
Floodplains	No	Wild and Scenic Rivers	No
Native American Religious Concerns	No	Wilderness	No

Proposed action

Impacts of the proposed action would be beneficial to the following resources. Other resources which were reviewed are listed in attachment 4.

Wildlife

Direct and indirect benefits to wildlife would be realized through the control of noxious weeds. Most noxious weeds are very aggressive, take over desired plant communities, and /or are toxic to animals.

There would be no cumulative impacts.

Range Management and Vegetation

The proposed action would have positive impacts on these resources. Most if not all noxious weeds are very invasive and have the potential to spread rapidly, reducing biodiversity and desired plant composition. Many noxious weeds are poisonous to livestock and wildlife.

There would be no cumulative impacts.

No Action Alternative

Impacts of the no action alternative would be that noxious weeds would have the opportunity to continue to invade the habitats of desirable native species and crowd out all other species. The result would be a mono-culture of noxious weeds.

IV. Consultation and Coordination:

Environmental Notification Bulletin Board, Utah State Office; BLM

Kevin N Shakespeare, Rangeland Management Specialist / Riparian & Weed Coordinator; Escalante BLM

Rick Oyler, Rangeland Management Specialist / T&E Species coordinator; Escalante BLM

Jennifer Purvine, Wildlife Biologist; Escalante BLM

Darrel "Butch" Olsen, NEPA coordinator; Escalante BLM

Gina Ginouves, Resource Advisor; Cedar City District Office BLM

VI Attachments:

1. Standards and stipulations
2. Standard operating procedures

Standards & Stipulations

1. Application operations will typically be suspended when any of the following conditions exist on the treatment area:

   a. Wind velocity exceeds 6 miles per hour for The application of liquids or 15 miles per hour for the application of granular herbicides, or as specified on the label (whichever is less).

   b. Snow or ice covers the target foliage.

   c. Precipitation is occurring or is imminent.

   d. Fog significantly reduces visibility.

   e. Air turbulence (for example, thermal updrafts) is sufficient to affect the normal chemical distribution pattern.

2. Herbicides will not be applied during rainfall or when rainfall is expected to occur within the next 3 days

3. Direction of spraying will be away from water sources and not towards them.

4. Protective buffer zones will be provided along important riparian habitat not designed to be treated and along streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and xeroriparian areas along important dry water courses.

5. Treatment will be restricted to only the areas of noxious weed infestation.

6. Spray tanks will not be washed out in or near by streams, and chemical containers will be disposed of in areas designated for such disposal.

7. All containers will be securely resealed before transporting.

8. Herbicide will not be mixed or transferred from one container to another in or near streams or drainage ways or on slopes exceeding 30 percent.

9. Precautions will be taken to assure that equipment used for storage, transport, and mixing or application will not leak into water or soil creating a contamination hazard.

10. Periods of treatment should avoid the bird nesting season and other critical seasons when loss of cover would be critical to wildlife; e.g. during critical reproductive periods and prior to severe winter weather conditions. Application of diesel fuel as a carrier of herbicides to bird eggs and young of any wildlife species should be avoided.

11. Prior to herbicide applications, any managed apiaries (honey bee colonies) in the vicinity will be notified in advance to allow time for removal or other protection of the hives.

12. When application and timing of herbicide spraying could cause a hazard for human consumption of wild game taken by sport hunters,

the spray area should be adequately posted to warn hunter of the potential hazard.

13. A preventative maintenance program will be incorporated as part of each project treatment proposal that would help guard against re-encroachment of undesired plant or shrub species.

14. The treatment area will be checked to see that all people have left the area before spraying takes place.

15. Private land will be treated only if there is a likelihood of noxious weeds from private land infesting federal lands.

16. On those allotments where spraying of Scotch Thistle will occur, involved livestock operators will be notified of the proposed spray date.

17. Chemical application and supervision will be only by males when there is a danger of Teratogenic effects.

18. Herbicide will be applied in strict conformity to label instructions.

19. Standards and guidelines in BLM Handbook Section 9011 (Pesticide Storage, Transportation, Spills, and Disposal) Section 11 will be met. This defines standards for storage facilities, posting and handling, accountability, and transportation. It covers spill prevention, planning, cleanup, and container disposal requirements.

20. A State certified pesticide applicator will be present for all chemical applications.

21. All BLM personnel will follow BLM safety procedure as outlined in BLM manual 9222, appendix 2, pages 8 through 10.

22. Individuals involved in the herbicide handling or application will be instructed on the safety plan and spill procedures.

Standard Operating Procedures

1. The safety of the general public, and employees and contractors of BLM will be primary consideration when proposing land treatments. Proper protective clothing will be worn by employees as prescribed in manuals.

2. During site specific analysis and preliminary planning of weed management and vegetation treatment a field survey will be complete prior to proposed treatment. This survey will identify target plant species as well as associated plant species, land uses of the area, soil physical and chemical characteristics, water, climatic conditions, proximity to sensitive resources such as threatened and endangered species of plants and animals, riparian habitat, areas of human use, wildlife use and migration, livestock grazing, presence of cultural resources, and any human health hazards which may exist. The project area will be mapped and flagged if appropriate.

3. Projects that may affect areas of historic, cultural, or archeological values will be subject to standard cultural surveys and site clearances. Project will be modified or altered to protect significant resources if found.

4. Sites proposed for vegetation treatment with herbicides will be treated prior to or after maximum recreation use occurs. Treatment sites with potential for public use, will be posted to notify the public of any hazard that may exist.

5. Projects that may affect areas of threatened or endangered species of plants or animals will be postpone or site design modified to protect the presence of these species. Section 7 Consultation (as required by the Endangered Species Act) with the appropriate office of the US Fish and Wildlife Service will be initiated.

6. If herbicides are proposed, those with minimum toxicity to fish and wildlife will be used. Protective buffer zones will be provided along streams, rivers, and lakes and important riparian and xeroriparian areas along dry water courses. Treatment periods will avoid bird nesting season and other critical seasons when loss of cover or disturbance by equipment would be detrimental to wildlife.

7. If herbicides are proposed for use, buffer strips will be provided adjacent to dwellings, domestic water sources, agriculture land, streams, lakes, and ponds, A minimum buffer strip 100 feet wide will be provided for aerial application, 25 feet for vehicle application and 10 feet for hand application. Any deviations must be in accordance with the label for the herbicide. Herbicides will be wiped on individual plants within 10 feet of water where application is critical.

8. Application contracts will contain stipulations for reduce the possibility for herbicide drift and spills. All personnel involved in pesticide application must be trained and license. Protective clothing and equipment, as specified on EPA-approved labels and the BLM H-9011-1 Handbook, will be worn by workers directly involved in herbicide applications and by employees

using hazardous tools/equipment.

9. Effectiveness of mitigating measures identified in project-specific environmental documents would be monitored through periodic inspections. Air and water quality would be monitored where appropriate.

   Post-treatment and surveys and evaluations will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment practices used. Information gained will be used to improve future project design.

10. The site-specific analysis will evaluate any herbicidal treatment proposed for use. The analysis will lead to a decision to supplement the existing EIS/ROD, a finding of no significant impact, or a decision not to proceed with the proposed use.

11. When a site-specific project to prevent or treat competing or unwanted vegetation with any proposed measure of treatment is being considered, the public will be notified. This notice should precede the scoping stage of the environmental analysis of the project under NEPA guidelines. Notice methods include local newspapers, district and resource area public notices, and public rooms used to distribute public information concerning proposed Bureau actions.

    Before a decision is made to proceed with treatment actions such as herbicides, the public will be invited to review and comment on the site-specific analyses for the project. The public is to be notified of the final decision for a site-specific project as soon as it has been made.

RECORD OF DECISION
Noxious Weed Control
EA # UT-049-98-006

Decision: I have reviewed the environmental assessment on the control of noxious weeds and have determined that the proposed action to control noxious weeds on lands within Garfield and Kane counties that are managed by the Bureau of Land Management would have no adverse impacts on the environment.

It is my decision to allow the proposed action within the scope of the standards and stipulations set forth in the assessment.

Approved: _____ 6/17/98
Gregg Christensen
Area Manager